

Book Reviews

To Comfort Always: A History of Holywell Hospital 1898 - 1998. Marc Mulholland. Homefirst Community Trust. £7.50. ISBN 0953449904

This hundred years record of Holywell Hospital, Antrim, has been very ably written in a far from drab style. Indeed it should appeal to a much wider readership than what might appear from the title. Also for those who may have had occasional contact with Holywell Hospital, they will discover interesting nuggets as well as the more numerical type data.

The beginnings of an institution should always be interesting to read. This, the author has done very successfully. That it arose out of pressure needs because of the growth of Belfast which was then part of County Antrim is understandable. Belfast's former mental hospital, situated on the site of the Royal Maternity Hospital, could not cope and the move had not yet taken place to Purdysburn Hospital.

Indeed the author might have remarked on the similarity between the long corridors of Holywell Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital.

This book takes one on a journey of the expansion of the hospital through difficult times, mainly financial as usual, where inpatient bed demands far outstripped their supply. Before the advent of the National Health Service, it was a County Council responsibility. The ratepayers of the time were none too anxious to part with their money to make for decent living conditions for patients, a sizeable number of whom came from Ballymena Workhouse at the beginning of World War One.

The World War produced further difficulties, as did typhoid from unsanitary conditions; and questionably sourced water supply. Oddly enough, tuberculosis does not figure as a problem in the book in the way that it did in overcrowded conditions in other institutions.

The changes in patients' welfare and comforts from the 1948 take-over by the N.H.S., and especially the effective drug treatments in the past forty years are described. It is often insufficiently recognised that the advent of tranquillisers and anti-depressants have produced previously unimaginable improvements in psychiatry comparable to the discovery of antibiotics in general medicine.

The era of the Resident Medical Superintendent, who was a man of authority in asylums and other hospitals is mentioned, but their power can barely be appreciated by present day hospital personnel. The changing legislation, out-patient and day patient growth in numbers, whilst in-patient numbers peaked in 1960, are mentioned with suitable illustrations.

Perhaps the development of satellite departments in Newtownabbey and Ballymoney, and also statements about progress over the past decade are too recent to assess properly. The last chapter of the book however shows that this hospital continues in a vital way to uphold the motto of Homefirst Trust – "To Comfort Always".

This is an easily read book. It conveys some insight into interactions between human beings. Hospitals were very

prison-like in many respects during the first half of the century, but the big social changes after World War Two are herein recorded, such as local involvement in dances, football matches, open days etc. Latterly this has given way to closure of unnecessary wards because of reduced pressure both for admission beds and long stay care needs in the hospital.

Perhaps this book will lead to further scholarship about other Mental Hospitals such as the oldest, St Luke's in Armagh, formerly Armagh Asylum built in 1825; and indeed the County General Hospitals have an interesting past which should be recorded. I hope this book finds the readership it deserves, not only or even chiefly, in psychiatric personnel and contacts, but among the population of County Antrim and Belfast in general.

W A GORDON MacCALLUM

Organ Allocation. Proceedings of the 30th International Conference on Transplantation and Clinical Immunology 2-4 June 1998. Edited by J L Touraine *et al.* Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN 0792350774. £92.

This review explores the many factors which impinge on the availability of organs for transplantation. While renal transplantation is a long established procedure, transplants of liver, heart/lung, bone marrow and pancreas are now also becoming routine. The success of transplantation has increased public expectations without an equivalent improvement in the supply of suitable organs for donation.

The main challenge remains the need to greatly increase the supply of organs for transplantation whether from cadaveric or live donors. Strategies to increase the availability of organs must be promoted at a national/regional level. Among the essentials are a legal framework which recognises "Opting Out", whereby everyone is presumed a potential donor, unless they have previously signalled the contrary. Furthermore a wider group of potential donors probably need to be considered, including those of older ages than previously considered optimal. "Live kidney donors" including unrelated donors, are a further source of possible supply. This raises particular concerns since relatives may feel under a sense of obligation or emotional blackmail to become donors.

The book contains information on the success of countries which have already embraced the changes not yet applied in the UK. These have resulted in an increased supply of organs for transplantation. On the other hand, there is a suggestion that increased availability leads to increased demand.

No western country has as yet, solved the imbalance of supply and demand with even those who have adopted "Opting Out" legislation unable to meet increasing demand. This book provides challenge to the Health Care Sector in Northern Ireland to aspire to become more self-sufficient at least in overall numbers of organs donated.

PAUL DARRAGH

Management of Injuries in Children. John F T Glasgow, H Kerr Graham. BMJ Publishing 1997. ISBN 0 72 79 0925 8.

This book has been written as an introduction to the assessment and management of the injured child principally for the junior doctor working in an A&E department. It is written in a